

INTRODUCING THE LEGAL SERVICES BENEFIT ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join my friend Mr. RYAN in reintroducing the Legal Services Benefit Act.

This bill reinstates the tax preference for companies to provide access to affordable preventive legal services for employees and retirees. This preference existed for many years, until it was allowed to sunset in 1991.

Group legal service plans provide employees with low cost, basic legal services, including assistance with the purchase of a home, the preparation of a will, probate services and the resolution of domestic conflicts, such as child support collection. With rising evictions and mortgage foreclosures, families need more help in these areas than ever. When hard times hit and families face difficult challenges, legal plans can help keep employees in their homes and focused on their jobs.

The Legal Services Benefit Act will restore the historic pre-tax treatment of group legal services. This change to the tax code will again make legal service plans affordable for both employers and employees, and will provide access to legal services for millions of middle-income Americans who might otherwise find legal troubles get out of hand.

Last year, this bill became part of the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008, and passed the House 238–179.

I ask my colleagues to again join me again in supporting this important bill that will help workers and businesses.

COMMENDING THE OUTSTANDING WOMEN OF SOMERSET COUNTY

HON. LEONARD LANCE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Mr. LANCE. Madam Speaker, I rise in honor of National Women's History Month, and I would like to congratulate a number of outstanding women who will be recognized at the Somerset County's Commission on the Status of Women awards in New Jersey's Seventh Congressional District.

The Commission presents awards annually in celebration of National Women's History Month in March. This year there are 17 women being honored, including entrepreneurs, educators and hometown heroes whose community service is considered extraordinary.

This year's Volunteerism Award winner is Nicolette Ash of Bridgewater. She is a 17-year-old founder of MADE or Making A Difference Everywhere.

The organization provides volunteer opportunities to teens in the Bridgewater area and allows them to gain community-service hours required for school, scholarships and religious groups.

Projects have included cleaning trash along the Raritan River, raking leaves for senior citizens, preparing food bundles for needy families and many more.

I am pleased to congratulate Nicolette Ash for her outstanding efforts and share her good work with my colleagues in the United States Congress and the American people.

ADAM WALSH CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009

HON. LAMAR SMITH

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, today I introduce the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Reauthorization Act of 2009. This bill reauthorizes a number of programs set to expire at the end of 2009 that help to track and apprehend sex offenders.

In 2006, Congress passed the Adam Walsh Act to protect the public, particularly children, from sexual predators. Under the Act, sex offenders must register with state or local jurisdictions after incarceration or while on probation. The Act expanded the National Sex Offender Registry by integrating the information in state sex offender registry systems and ensuring that law enforcement agencies across the United States have access to this information. The Act further requires states to make registry information available to the public via government Internet websites. A number of new grant programs were also authorized to assist states in improving sex offender registration and related requirements of the Act. It is several of these grant programs and some related provisions that are expiring at the end of this year, though the registration requirements and related authorities are not.

Unfortunately, many of the programs authorized by the Adam Walsh Act, including the expiring programs reauthorized by this bill, have received insufficient or no direct funding from Congress.

There are currently more than 100,000 missing sex offenders who have failed to register as required under current law. These predators are working, attending school, and living in close proximity to our children unbeknownst to parents and law enforcement officials.

By reauthorizing these important Adam Walsh Act programs, Congress will demonstrate its commitment to empower federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to protect children and identify, locate and apprehend sex offenders.

These programs were specifically drafted to provide the Department of Justice and state and local law enforcement agencies the tools necessary to track and apprehend absconders from the Sex Offender Registry. These expiring programs reauthorized by this bill include:

1. The Sex Offender Management Assistance Program (SOMA)—this provision awards grants to states to assist with the implementation of the sex offender registry under the AWA.

2. Pilot Program for Monitoring Sexual Offenders—this provision empowers the Attorney General to make grants to state, local and tribal governments in order to outfit sex offenders with electronic monitoring devices. It authorizes appropriations of \$5 million for fiscal years 2010–2014 and thereafter requests the Attorney General to report on the effectiveness of the program.

3. Grants to Combat Sexual Abuse of Children—this provision establishes a grant program for law enforcement agencies to combat sexual abuse of children with authorized appropriations of the necessary sums for fiscal years 2010–2014.

4. Jessica Lunsford Address Verification Grant Program—this provision creates the Jessica Lunsford Address Verification Grant Program to enable state, local and tribal grantees to verify the addresses of registered sex offenders with authorization of the necessary appropriations for fiscal years 2010–2014 and the requirement of an Attorney General's report on the effectiveness of the program.

5. Fugitive Safe Surrender—this provision instructs the Marshals Service to establish and coordinate a Fugitive Safe Surrender program in designated cities for the capture of fugitives from federal, state and local justice. It authorizes appropriations of \$8 million for that purpose in fiscal years 2010–2014.

6. Sex Offender Apprehension Grants; Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment Grants—this provision creates a grant program available to both public and private entities that assist in treatment of juvenile sex offenders or that assist the states in their enforcement of sex offender registration requirements. Appropriations are authorized for fiscal years 2010–2014 in such amounts as are necessary in the case of the enforcement grants and in the amount of \$10 million per year in the case of the juvenile sex offender grants.

Madam Speaker, Congress should move quickly to reauthorize these programs. Congress should also appropriate necessary funds for the full implementation of these programs. I urge my colleagues to support the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Reauthorization Act of 2009.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I would like to state for the record my position on the following votes I missed due to personal reasons.

On Monday March 9, 2009 I missed rollcall votes 110, 111, and 112. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on those rollcall votes.

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